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Working Group on Indigenous Populations
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REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS PERTAINING TO THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE: HEALTH AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Information received from indigenous peoples' organizations

Addendum

"TUPAJ AMARU" INDIAN MOVEMENT

[Original: Spanish]
[15 June 1996]

The new international economic order and indigenous peoples

1. There is a close causal relationship between the exercise of the right of indigenous peoples to free and sovereign development, including the right to benefit from their natural resources, and the relentless march of economic globalization, the illegal appropriation of wealth by the dominant élites and the daunting uniformity that has gripped our capacity to think and our right to dream of a better world.

2. Article 1 of the Declaration on the Right to Development proclaims that "The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development".

3. The paradox is striking: the world's dominant economic ideology is incompatible with the concept of the right to development and therefore contrary to the effective enjoyment of natural resources, because, according to the neo-liberal orthodoxy, human and societal development take place through the anarchic and irrational interplay of blind market forces.

4. As experience has demonstrated, the operation of the law of supply and demand, which knows neither law nor morals, has in the course of time had harmful and fatal consequences for the survival of the nations of the third world, and in particular for the ancestral forms and modes of production inherent to the indigenous peoples of the Americas.

5. Shielded by the new international economic order, the neo-liberal model is driving peoples and nations in the underdeveloped countries along the path to genocide, the annihilation of age-old communities, the elimination of the economic role of the State and the establishment of an economic dictatorship under the super-State transnational corporations in national States. It is imperative for the collective consciousness, and in particular indigenous wisdom, to develop resistance to the unchecked neo-liberal model.

6. It follows from the foregoing that the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights, as understood within the framework of the prevailing economic model, will encounter serious obstacles, and it will be impossible to tackle the world's global environmental problems unless States assume their economic responsibility for regulating the anarchic activity of the transnational corporations which are devastating Mother Earth, polluting the air and water and gradually destroying life itself.

7. In response to the question "to be or not to be", the indigenous peoples' economic policy advocates sustainable development as an alternative form of development to the neo-liberal model. This requires States and the international community substantially to alter their economic development policy, to regulate the rational and reasonable use of natural resources, to renounce their way of living, producing and consuming and to place the human being at the basis of integral development in order to reconcile four great ideas: economic growth, equity, social justice and environmental sustainability.

8. In resolution 48/183 of 21 December 1993, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 1996 "International Year for the Eradication of Poverty" in order to reinforce peace and achieve sustainable development.

9. The indigenous organizations believe that the scourge of abject poverty which is violently and relentlessly lashing the poor nations, and particularly the indigenous populations, should be of paramount concern to United Nations bodies, and in particular the Working Group on Indigenous Populations.

10. Our aim is not to lay down a definition of the state of poverty, which would be an extremely complex exercise on account of its multiple facets. However, it is imperative to analyse the phenomenon's universal nature and the criteria for identifying abject poverty, extreme poverty, critical poverty, indigence, deep poverty or absolute poverty in historical terms, i.e. within the framework of production relations, of the increasing concentration of labour-generated wealth in a few hands and the pillaging of the land of millions of persons and the denial to them of their means of subsistence.

11. In societies based on competition, an insatiable appetite for profit, trade war and the exploitation of man by man, extreme poverty has dug the grave of generations during every phase in history, from the cradle to the grave, except under the Inca civilization, which was based on the following principles: to each according to his needs, from each according to his ability. There were no poor or beggars in Inca society.

12. As a result of the extremely severe austerity policy known as "structural adjustment" imposed on the developing countries by the International Monetary Fund, "between 1975 and 1990 wages lost between 10 and 35 per cent of their purchasing power, per capita income fell by more than 7 per cent from 1970 to 1980, and payment of the external debt led to a direct transfer of between 30 and 50 per cent of the gross resources of the third world to the rich countries" (see Nouvel Observateur, No. 11, 1992).

13. Throughout the length and breath of the third world, workers, miners and Indians experience the consequences of neo-liberal policy in their daily lives and feel it in their flesh: absolute poverty, the marginalization of and discrimination against native people and the lack of funds for education, health and housing and for dealing with the basic problems of subsistence.

14. Various sources estimate the number of persons living in poverty at more than 1 billion, 60 per cent of whom, i.e. 20 per cent of the world's population, live in extreme poverty (see E/CN.4/Sub.2/1995/15).

15. According to figures published by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, "a person is considered poor if the total of his/her income earnings from the various assets he/she commands - such as land, capital and labour - do not allow that person a minimum nutritionally adequate diet and other essential non-food requirements".

16. The economic crisis sweeping through Latin America is most dramatically illustrated by the deterioration in living conditions. The final declaration of the second Regional Conference on Poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Quito in November 1990, estimated the number of poor at over 270 million, i.e. 62 per cent of the total population. These poverty-stricken individuals form a paradoxical contrast with the opulence of the tiny minorities who make up less than 5 per cent of the population but who account for the bulk of consumption, amounting to no less than 50 per cent of income.

17. Structural adjustment has a drastic impact on the health sector. Although Mother Earth possesses sufficient resources, 800 million human beings are undernourished. According to The World Health Report 1995, "Every year in

the developing world, 12.2 million children under age 5 die, most of them from preventable causes - preventable, in many cases, for just a few US cents". The report concludes that "poverty has continued and will continue to be a major obstacle to health development". In the underdeveloped countries, infant mortality averages 112 per thousand live births and life expectancy at birth has fallen to 54.

18. As in other latitudes, the repercussions of the neo-liberal model are most dramatic in rural areas, 39 per cent of whose population is extremely poor and 34 per cent poor. The two categories combined amount to 73 per cent. (See Revista Unitas, Nos. 13 and 14, 1993.)

19. In its study of the human development index, the United Nations Development Programme found that among indigenous communities the rate of infant mortality averages 94 per thousand live births and life expectancy at birth is less than 54 years (see United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report, 1991-1992). Moreover, in 1992, 36.5 per cent of the indigenous population was illiterate, 81 per cent of them lacked access to drinking water and 86 per cent of their dwellings were without sanitation. (See Estrategia Social Boliviana, La Paz, 1991.)